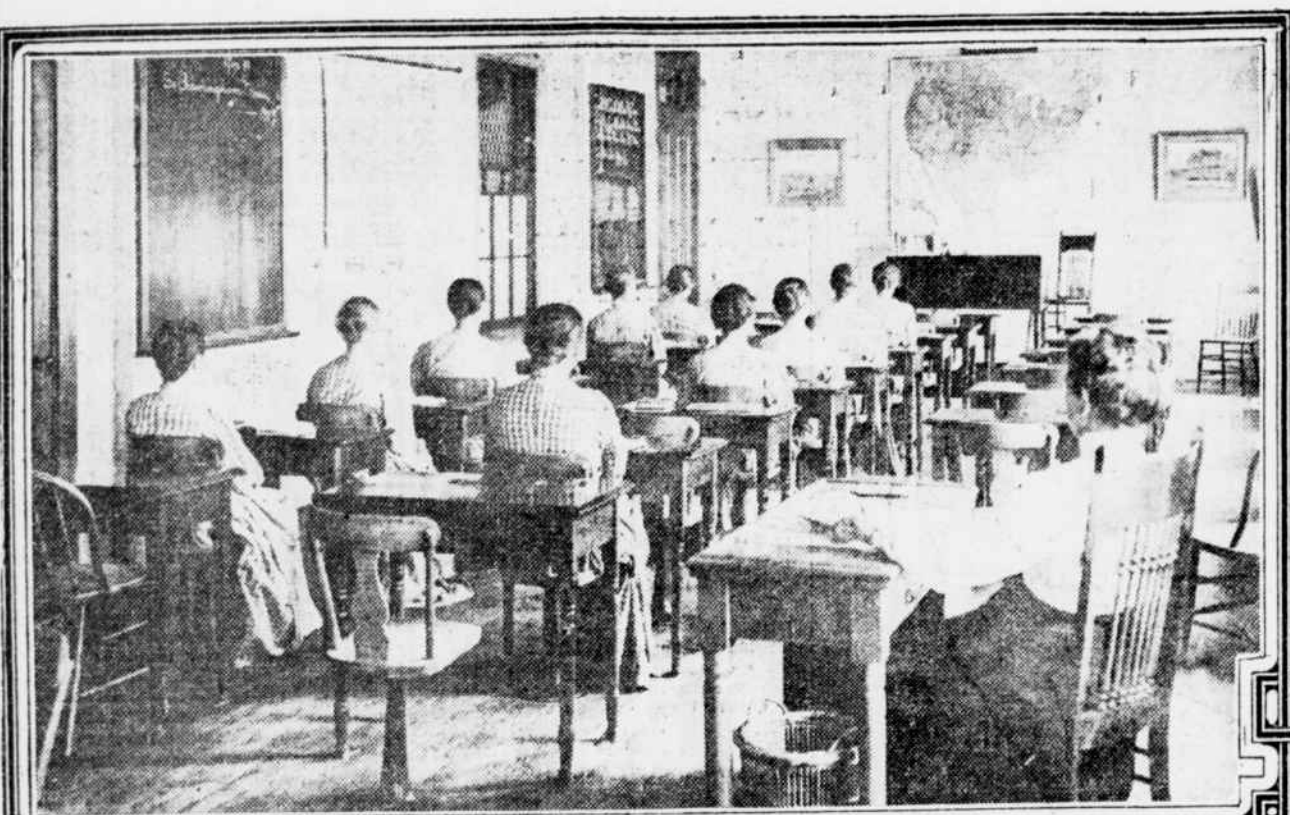


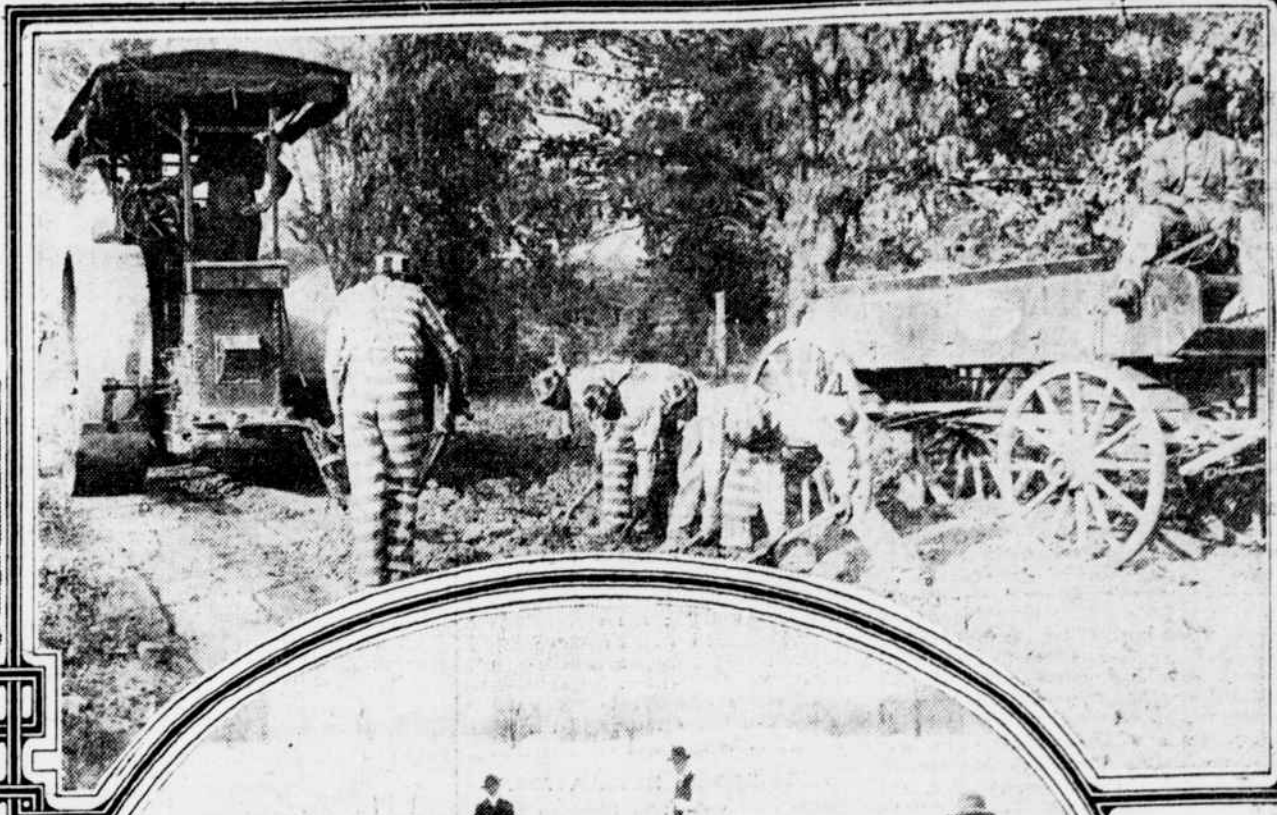
Would Make Laboratories of Prisons and Solve Civic Problems There



School Room in Women's Prison. (COPYRIGHT BY BROWN BROS.)



A Youthful Tennessee Convict



Convict Road Builders in Virginia

Prisoners Working On a Mississippi Levee.

Penologist Thinks Such Institutions Can Be Made Sources of Benefit to the State.

"THE prison should be made a laboratory."

"A laboratory?"

"Yes—a laboratory where problems are solved—problems of industrial education, labor, public efficiency and eugenics."

"Pooh, pooh, hardly!"

There are a good many persons who would unthinkingly disagree in just that language with the philosophical idealists who are not only dreaming but beginning to believe that an affirmative answer may be given to that question. The latter actually think the time may come when men will be more anxious to get into the penitentiary than to stay out, owing to the comfort and excellent opportunities to be found there. That this danger is not so fanciful as it appears is not beyond demonstration. Tramps are such proverbial frequenters of workhouses—where there is no work—and county jails, in the winter season, that the custom has become a subject for jokes in the "funny column."

This story is told of an occupant of a poorhouse in the neighborhood of Milwaukee while the city government was in control of the Socialists. The food served at the almshouse was so bad that he determined to change his bed and board. He had heard that the workhouse, under the Socialist regime, provided lodgings and a table that were superior in character, and one day he shook the dust of the almshouse from his feet. Entering the city, he approached a policeman and made his wishes known.

"You'll have to be arrested," said the protector of the peace.

"All right, arrest me."

"I can't. You haven't committed any crime."

The victim of the poorhouse stooped down, clutched a clod of earth and threw it at the ear of a passing funeral.

"There," said he, "have I done enough to be arrested?"

It appeared that he had, and ultimately he found himself in the workhouse, where conditions were much more to his liking.

There are many reasons why such a programme as that mentioned seems to not a few persons the fantastic dream of an idealistic penologist. There are so many practices attached to the management of prisons and jails which must be sloughed off, so many persons whose attitude toward crime and criminals must be revised, that it is difficult to imagine that some day penal institutions may be transformed into social laboratories.

One of the persons who must be indoctrinated with the new idea is the sheriff. A sheriff is not necessarily bad, but so long as he has been placed in that position in return for political work and is compensated by fees and receives a stated allowance for feeding the inmates perhaps he cannot be expected to advance rapidly in the field of progressive penology. It is the nature of some men to make allowances from public funds go as far as possible toward their own pockets, especially when the person for whom the allowance is made is the football of society, only a drunkard or a criminal outcast. It has become almost platitudinous to say that personal interest in the duties attached does not always accompany election to a political plum. There are a great many sheriffs in the United States and that some of the conditions which Pickwick found in the Fleet could be duplicated was illustrated recently in the jail in a large industrial city in Alabama. In the county in which the city is located it is said the sheriff sometimes receives in fees in the course of a year a sum equal to the salary of the President of the United States.

AN INDIGNANT INSPECTOR.

On a certain Sunday the state inspector of prisons visited the jail. The prisoners were about to sit down to their midday meal. He tasted the food which had been prepared. It was so vile that he immediately called up the sheriff on the telephone. That official was informed that he would have to improve conditions before he sat down to his own Sunday dinner. Improvements began immediately and the cook found himself without a job.

History does not relate whether that cook was like the one of whom E. Stagg Whitin, general secretary of the National Committee on Prison Labor, tells in his recent book, "Penal Servitude."

Mr. Whitin had been visiting a prison and was on his way back to the neighboring town in a somewhat rickety conveyance belonging to the institution. An individual who was standing at the side of the road called out:

"Hello there, boss! Can I ride town with you?"

Without waiting for an invitation beyond the voluntary reining in of the horses by the driver he climbed in and took a seat.

"Great institution that," he remarked, swinging his hand around in a circle which covered the length and breadth of the prison.

"I'm an institution man myself. I can tell you more about institutions than would fill a book. Experience—why I've worked in no end of institutions. I've worked in five states. I'm a wise one, if you're looking for one of that kind. Well, if you know your biz, I know mine, so there's a go." Thus he pattered on until Mr. Whitin reached his hotel. The man, still without invitation, followed him to his room.

"Now we're all alone, I'll talk on the level," said the loquacious and audacious one, as soon as they got inside the door. "You're a practical man, and business is business. I want a job, and want it bad. What I want is a penal job. Now, I don't want to make much, and will put you in right. My job is cook, and I buy the stuff. Now, say you get the institution to pay 25 cents a day keep. I can feed 'em for 10.

A couple of cents apiece is good enough for me, and you takes the rest—that's easy. Of course, it depends on what you get. I can keep 'em fat on 10—I did that when I was down in Rhode Island. But maybe you can only get 15—had business. You have to starve 'em to make a decent profit. But I can keep 'em alive on 4—just alive, you know. You don't think I can do it, eh? Well, you see I know the big grocers—they fix it up with me. We arrange it all right. You don't have to do anything but O. K. the bills."

There was dissent from this proposition. "You wouldn't O. K. the bills! Well, you are a green one! You see, you O. K. the bills for the whole 25 cents a day—that's easy. They couldn't get at you for that. The goods come to me, and I O. K. 'em as all right—and they are et. Who's to tell what they are?"

Mr. Whitin was curious as to where the rake-off came in.

"The rake-off—you don't see where it comes in? You are a green one, for sure. It's as certain as day and legal. Why, the Supreme Court couldn't bust it. Why, them goods the grocer sells to me for 15 just to make it good—they're mine. I sell 'em back to them, and they sell 'em to the folks at the institution, you know. You buys the stuff, all right. They pays me for the goods I'm selling the difference 'twixt what you're paying and what they oughter cost. At the end of the month I settles up with you. You've got me. If I don't make good you fire me. I gets my salary and a few pickings, jolly the guys in the kitchen and whistles for my living. And you? Well, you're the swell guy. You looks fine an' swears it's all straight goods—so it is, damned if the law can touch it. You tell the folks it's on the level. So it is, but the level slides your way."

As Mr. Whitin was not seeking a contract to feed the convicts at 25 cents per capita per diem, the cook who wanted to help out in a question of "honest graft" is still waiting on Mr. Whitin's "doing something."

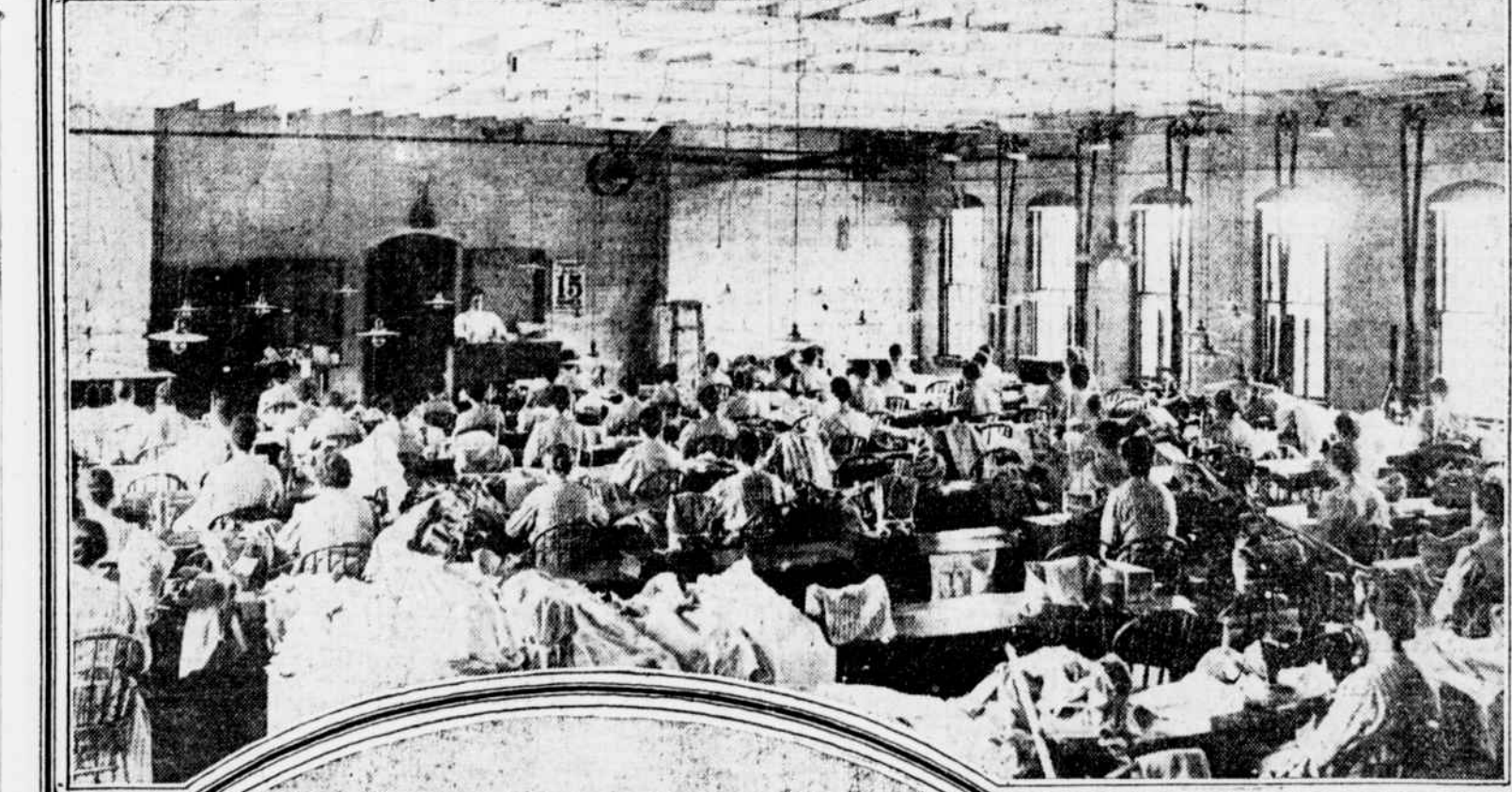
MERELY A "PIPE DREAM."

It is not in the composition of a sheriff or a cook who is making something "out of" the prisoners in this manner to look upon such a vision as that of the idealistic penologist as more than a "pipe dream."

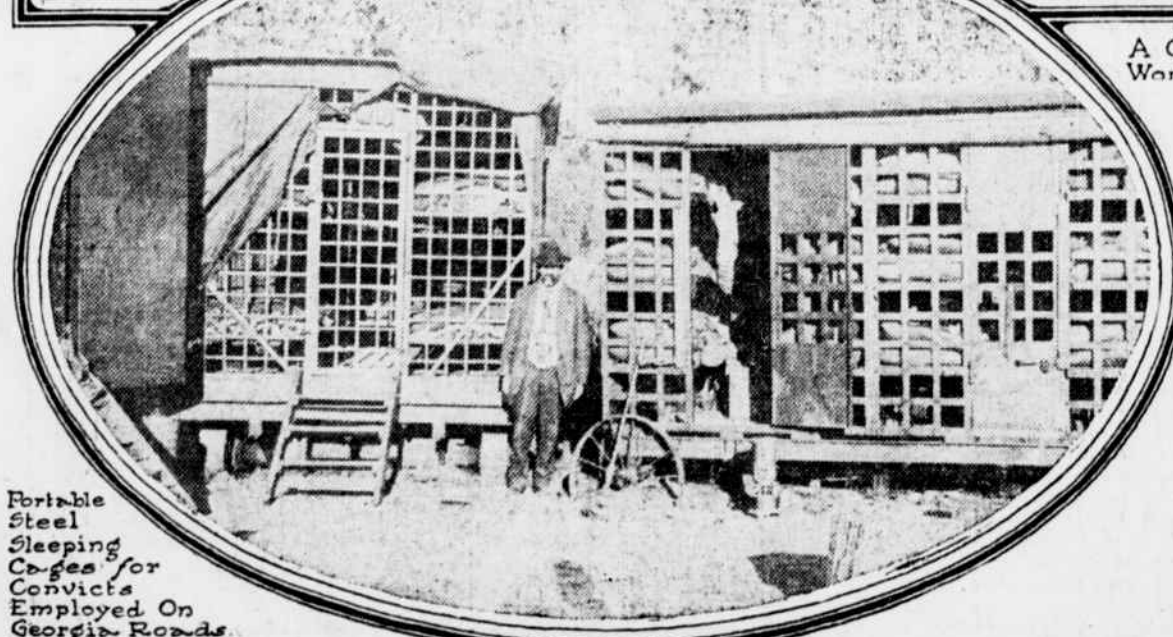
Then, there are to be converted the state officials, the contractors and the taxpayers, who look upon prison labor as an asset to the state. To them, also, "business is business." A convict is only a mechanism capable of producing so much manufactured product. The contract system has been described as a kind of slavery a little worse than negro slavery, for negroes were property whose physical welfare was of some importance to the owner, but convicts are no one's property, and there is a constant supply to take the places of those who succumb. Indeed, if there is not a sufficient number of criminals to fulfill the terms of the contracts, the highways and hedges

are sometimes ransacked to meet the deficiency.

Maryland is one of the numerous states



A Contract Shirt Factory in a Women's Reformatory Prison. (COPYRIGHT BY BROWN BROS.)



Portable Steel Scaffolding for Convicts Employed On Georgia Roads

The Reformatory Side of Prison Life. TEACHING YOUNG CONVICTS THE ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION AT TRENTON.

"Convicts are sent to this institution from all over the state for terms up to ten years, though the average is probably nearer twelve months. Both sexes are taken, and there is no age limit. At present (November 1, 1911) the oldest inmate is sixty-two and the youngest twelve years. The commitments seem to be made on an arbitrary basis; in the counties the justices commit all their short-term people to the institution. From the counties come the young boys. The form of commitment is in many cases faulty, and it seems an admitted fact that habeas corpus proceedings would release a large number of such convicts. Where the convict can pay the cost of proceedings, release is possible. It is stated that \$200 would procure jail delivery if spent for legal aid for the convicts. How many convicts are guilty of the charge for which they are incarcerated it is impossible to tell. They all claim to be innocent, but a very large proportion, probably two-thirds, are committed for vagrancy, train riding and trespass. The legal form of commitment of the railroad cases states that the man is guilty of about a dozen acts in connection with the trains—too many, it would seem, to have been accomplished by any one man—but the form is printed and ready for any emergency. The blinks state that the convict has waived trial by jury and other legal technicalities. Several justices have charge of these railroad cases. The Governor is said to pardon convicts of this class upon protest by any reputable citizen, and it is understood that he does not investigate the merits of the cases."

There were at the time a number of boys of twelve and thirteen years of age in the institution.

On the commitment blank for railroad cases among the different so-called crimes mentioned were walking on the track, loitering, riding in box cars, boarding trains and riding on the trucks. For aught the commitment indicated, nothing having been crossed out, some of those sent to the House of Correction might have been guilty of tramping the ties, loitering, jumping trains and occupying accommodations on lurching car trucks simultaneously.

The taxpayer, perhaps, asks why prison labor should not be sold to the highest bidder. "Is it not better," he thinks, "to have men busy than idle, and are they not helping to pay for their keep? Those men cost enough when they were free, and we ought not to be obliged to pay for them."

Continued on seventh page.

ing to a report made by officials of the National Committee on Prison Labor, a Governor of the state has been known to direct the justices to send as many convicts as possible to the House of Correction because of the need of keeping good faith with the contractors, who are supposed to have at their disposal a certain number of laborers. Some inquisitive persons seem to think from what they have observed in connection with the commitments to this institution that this order occasionally results, whether intended to do so or not, in the use of a dragnet when the supply of labor is below the requirements. Owing to the convenience of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad as a highway between Washington and Baltimore, especially for those persons who are without the means of paying for a ticket, this route between the national capital and the Monument City is in high favor among travelers of that class. Walking the ties, or riding on the trucks, however, is trespassing. Bearing this in mind the following from the report of the representatives of the National Prison Committee is of interest:

are sometimes ransacked to meet the deficiency. Maryland is one of the numerous states in which a manufacturer who wants to obtain labor of the prison type can hire it from the authorities. Among Maryland's institutions is the House of Correction, at Jessup, a short distance from Baltimore, on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Accord-